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THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER

'That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic . . .' James Connolly

RÁIMÉIS



Bishop O'Dwyer

THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST CONFERENCE



THE CONTRACEPTION QUESTION



RÁIMÉIS

By Dermot McEvoy

By the time you're reading this I expect (DV) — there I go again! — to have returned from my missionary work among the English and to be passing round my begging bowl in Co. Dublin. The brush-off will not be new for me but, I feel somehow I'll survive. There's cheek!

But I'd better get on to Tooting in south-west London even if it's only to justify the headline. I arrived there five years ago on the carefully-chosen Twelfth of July after a lifetime (almost) in the Royal Borough of Kensington. The natives were friendly and, against the popular notion of the stand-offish English, called to welcome my wife and myself. In return, I congratulated them on the efficiency of the local (Wandsworth) council: the gas, electricity and water were laid on; the dustmen had removed piles of non-domestic rubbish without demur; my two telephones were working. "I find Tooting", I said, "Kensington's superior in services". Then one old dear among the neighbours chipped in with: "But this is Upper Tooting". A warning glance from my wife stifled the retort I was about to make and I merely said "Of course".

The petit bourgeoisie of Tooting/Upper Tooting had to wait a year before they realised what a snake had come among them. In the interval I had joined the local Labour Party and was by then an activist on the General Management Committee. My house was plastered with Labour slogans — it was election committee rooms for two wards — and pictures of the candidate and Harold Wilson were in every window. The natives never really quite forgave me: I heard one "respectable" woman neighbour look at the propaganda display and mutter "My God!"

No holds were barred at the national and local elections: bands, banners, processions, strident demand after strident demand for better housing, better pensions, free travel for the elderly. Indeed, when we got this last item for women at 60, men at 65, the blue-rinse women, who had opposed the idea with vigour, were the first to take advantage of it for their West End shopping sprees. We never had a clergyman at any of our meetings: the local RCs were either fully-fledged Tory, or pretended to be apolitical. One priest from a neighbouring parish singled me out from a bevy of Labourites at a hospital fete and denounced me as "a Red, a Commie, a disturber of youth. We all lived quietly until you came". He danced with rage when I made a three-word reply. I shall never know why. It may be that his auditory faculties were impaired or my enunciation poor because all I said in answer was: GO UNFROCK YOURSELF!

Yet all my neighbours — when they heard that my wife and I were returning to Ireland — came to express their regret. Including the local bobby. "Where will I get a decent cup of tea now?", he moaned. And the staunch Conservative, a past President of Surrey County Bowling Association, who advised me to take up bowls "at Kingstown", and offered me equipment at factory price. He showed me one of these balls, made of vinyl and much heavier than I'd ever imagined. Though I felt that I could put the necessary bias into the game, the book of rules put me off: One was expected to stand still while your opponent was bowling — apparently one is not allowed to try to put him off his shot: "White from the waist up should always be worn and never allow braces, if you have to wear them, to be visible": In team matches, white or cream trousers, are *de rigueur*. My neighbour kept referring to these vinyl spheres as "woods" and seemed genuinely upset when I turned down his bargain. Now, if he had offered me a new set of balls ..

I expect I shall find some role to play in Ireland. There seem to be plenty of opportunities for volunteers for social and community work, but I'm a political animal. Naturally, I rule out membership of the gombeen men's party Fianna Fáil, and Fine Gael while Cosgrave — the Mongrel Fox in *Hibernia's* apt phrase — is at the helm and, of course, for other reasons. Not, I feel sure, that either party would want anyone like me. I suppose it will have to be the Irish Labour Party — if it will

Last Tango in Tooting

have me. I veer towards Senator Noel Browne whose Trinity summer school lecture said so many things on my behalf. We'll see. But, whatever else I do, I'll back Conor Cruise O'Brien.

Coming back to Limerick for a moment. Jim Kemmy seems to be disappointed that he was not elected to the "important" committees of Limerick City Council, that the Protestant bishop's representative was preferred for educational and vocational advice (this would never have been allowed in Bishop O'Dwyer's day!) But Jim can take heart from his election to the National Monuments Committee: he has important work to do there and I'm giving him his first job — to change the name of Bishop-O'Dwyer Bridge. You see, my father, Andy, editor of the *Limerick Leader*, was excommunicated through the agency of this bishop. A generation later, when, in my presence, he was asked by Dr. Michael Fogerty, Bishop of Killaloe, why he never went to Mass, my father replied, "My Lord, I don't have to, I was excommunicated long ago by Bishop O'Dwyer". To which, Dr. Fogarty snorted: "But O'Dwyer was a madman; everyone knew that". Now, Jim Kemmy, is Limerick to be the laughing stock of the world with a monument to a madman? Go to it.

In looking for something to do in Ireland until I get my sea legs I glanced through the bulletin of the British Mensa Society, of which I'm a member in good standing. The Dublin group, I found, meets in a public house (which could be a hazard for a chap like me). But, Jesus wept, the pub is named "O'Dwyer's"! I shall certainly have to apply IQ to this one.

Memo to Cllr. Frank Prendergast (Labour) who said, "I voted according to my party, in some cases against my principles", What principles?

Memo to Cllr. Jim Kemmy: Does Alderman Pat ("The Ambitious") Kennedy keep a dog in the mayoral parlour, even a mongrel? (I need to know).

Memo to Seán Bourke: I expect shortly to be visiting Limerick to deal with two outstanding matters. One is relatively simple: the purchase of a Denny's bacon box to be used as a coffin when my time comes. In view of the advertisement for Denny's, I expect you to arrange this — for free. Perhaps even you could get Denny's to pay — and we could split the loot? The other matter concerns the hearing of your confession in the middle of Bishop O'Dwyer Bridge (I hope to borrow Cllr. Kemmy's red robe for the occasion) and the re-consecration of the bridge. For both ceremonies I shall be using the Versicant (Dyer's, of course). The re-naming of the bridge will be reserved for a later date.

Now for a competition with prizes of a pint of Guinness for the first three correct solutions opened. It is a question that was posed in a Mensa test-in a slightly different form: A man who was very depressed because he had lost all his money went to Bishop O'Dwyer Bridge to commit suicide; but he did not do so because:

1. He suddenly remembered an important appointment.
2. Someone persuaded him not to.
3. He received news that he had not lost all of his money.
4. He was taken ill.

Pick the right answer. (People named Dwyer or O'Dwyer or bishops' assistants must enclose £1 entry fee). Enclose cover of *Limerick Socialist*.

The MC is calling the last dance. It's a tango and it reminds me of an Underground poster showing someone suspiciously like young Groucho Marx going into his dance with a lady in a cloche hat of '20s' style who seems to have only one leg. The letterpress says: "You know what they say about people with one leg?" "No. What do they say about people with one leg?" "Ah ... that's what I love about you ... your innocence, your naïvité, your wooden leg". "Why Mr. Weaselticket this is so sudden, so unexpected, ... so cheap!" The poster advertised Virgin Records. I often wondered what they could be.

And so we say farewell to Tooting ... see you at O'Dwyer Bridge (DV!)!

and not elected by the American membership. The Provisional leadership in the United States prefer not to sell "An Phoblacht" because it sometimes mentions a socialist republic and therefore the Irish Northern Aid Committee produce their own paper. She believes the Provos are wrong in believing that they can unite Ireland with the bomb and the gun.

Of herself she says: "I am not a Marxist. I am an Irish Republican. We want Ireland for the Irish people. We're not just interested in freeing Ireland, we want to make sure that the wealth of Ireland is in the hands of the Irish people".

Another delegate at the Conference is a twenty one year old blonde Dutch Communist, Marie-Annet Van Grunsven. Marie, a small, pretty girl in blue jeans and a green blouse, is a student at the University of Utrecht. Here she studies to become a social worker. She sees the struggle in the North as part of the international revolution. She made contact with Sinn Féin through the Communist Youth Group in the University of which she is a member. She says that the Dutch people do not understand the war in Northern Ireland. They hear of 'radicals' placing bombs and shooting soldiers' and they think that it is a war between Protestants and Catholics. She has come here to learn more and to report back to her organisation which has its own newspapers. She believes some left-wing Dutch papers give a true picture but she does not trust the 'Dutch establishment press'.

She claims that her father, a fruit farmer in Holland, has been adversely affected by membership of the E.E.C. She fears that the Irish will not fare well in the Community. Labour and capital gravitate to the centre and Ireland is a peripheral country.

She feels strongly about the treatment of guest workers in Holland. They do all the dirty work and they 'are used by the capitalists to split the 'Dutch Labour Movement'. She says that the Dutch government tries to make the Dutch worker believe that lack of work or bad housing is caused by the immigrant workers. After two years working in the country a guest worker is given 5000 guilders if he decides to return home. She believes this has two purposes: during the two years the worker has become more political and more conscious of his rights and the factory owners prefer to have more malleable workers, secondly many of the workers — Turks, Spaniards — come from countries under dictatorial rule, are being indoctrinated against the system in Holland and the rulers at home prefer to see them return before the indoctrination is completed.

She believes that the capitalist system could be changed through politics but she does not consider it likely.

"The government and the factory owners will not give away their power for nothing. In Northern Europe the trade unions and the labour parties are working with the capitalists. I don't like violence but I believe seriously that you need violence to get the capitalism system away".

Hans Spyker is also here for the conference. Hans, a bearded 27-year-old social worker, is a member of the Ireland Information Group. He came here some years with a group, went to Sinn Féin headquarters to get some information on Ireland, and founded the Ireland Information Group on their return. They publish a magazine every two months in which they present their view of the violence in Northern Ireland. He believes that it is similar to the struggle in Angola and Mozambique, a war of liberation. The Magazines' circulation is 200 copies. They try to get their viewpoint across to the Dutch workers but with little success as most of these read the Dutch dailies.

When the People's Democracy and others began to agitate about the shipment of eels for processing from Lough Neagh to Holland, Hans Spyker and his group picketed the Dutch company headquarters. He believes that the struggle against the multi-national companies can best be carried on by an international front. He points to Verolme and Dutch-Shell with interests in Ireland and Holland and to the possibility of linked industrial action.

One does not know what, if any, the results of the Anti-Imperialist conference will be but one can hardly doubt the dedication and sincerity of many of the people who came together to exchange political views and ideas.

THE UNREAL THING

For generations the GAA has combined with the Catholic Church and the political parties to produce a vicious and narrow form of Irish Nationalism. In most rural parishes both forces were intimately forged to give credence to the myth of a "historical Irish nation" and a "fostering of the National Ideals".

In recent years the development of "alien" ideas, such as the whole questioning the claims and values of the Irish Constitution has put increasing pressure on the purpose of the "National Ideals", one of which finds physical expression in the military activities of the Provos.

"Ireland Gaelic and Free" has been the traditional cry and the GAA has played its part in creating the charade, which is now crumbling in the face of modern cultural influences.

However, there are those who still desperately cling to the "National Ideals", conjured up in scenes of "fine young men hurling in the evening sunlight" and the "grand colleens dancing delightfully at the Crossroads".

An effort to revive hurling is the main object of Féile na nGael which is now being held in Limerick. Chairman of these "visionary" GAA men is one, Br. P.P. Guthrie, noted for his fanatical obsession with a number of causes. In charge of many young minds in Sexton Street CBS, he views the spread of soccer with hostility and, like de Valera, has the propensity for "looking into his own heart for the good of Ireland". His personal ambition and his lust for publicity are only outdone by his fellow Sexton Street teacher, Ald. Pat Kennedy.

Boundless energy, aided with finance from the imperialist Coca Cola company (how Irish can you get!) ensure a varied programme, and even President Childers toured the Feile Museum, which was mainly organised by a P.J. Ryan, a GAA official in County Limerick.

It was this same P.J. Ryan who spoke at a press conference in the Royal George giving details of the Feile. Present were the GAA General Secretary and Tom O'Donnell, T.D. Numerous speeches were given and it was left to the bould P.J. to inject a touch of drama in to the proceedings.

In the midst of the trendy media gathering P.J. gave vocal expression to the dilemma of the rural GAA/Nationalist figure. "The Museum will have a number of special exhibits", he told the audience and went on to give his tour de force. "There will be a momento commemorating the Limerick All-Ireland hurling win ...", said the rampant Ryan and paused dramatically and added, "Made in Long Kesh".

With wildly flashing eyes, P.J. waited for reaction. There was a silence. No applause. No praise for the "freedom fighters". No one gave a damn. No misty eyed harking to the past of Finn Mac Cool or longing for the "United" and Gaelic Ireland. It was out of place in the elegant lounge of the Royal George. (What the Coca-Cola chaps thought about a "United" and Gaelic Ireland is not recorded. Profits, not hurling, is the name of their game in the Irish market).

And this is the crushing dilemma in which the GAA nationalism finds itself. Based on a myth, which is quickly being shown to hold only empty and twisted idealism, it is being forced to come to terms with the economic forces of foreign capitalism as the price for its survival.

The GAA image of the ideal Ireland of fine hurlers and grand colleens spouting Gaelic is dying hard. It is being washed away by the economic tide of free trade and the dictates of the modern world. It is an ironic contradiction of the G.A.A.'s position that Coca-Cola, one of the leading representatives of these economic forces, should be the sponsor of its Feile na nGael. The fact that much of the Feile was swallowed without a ripple in the public excitement generated by the television showing of the World Cup Soccer Competition is also a further sign of the G.A.A.'s dilemma.

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PRICE ½D.

OUR BIRTHDAY

Dear Reader, thanks to you for your support, we have reached our first birthday. We had an intention of making it a double number, but — oh, yes, there is a but — In our first issue we drew attention that everyman-for-himself — and — the-weakest-to-the-wall dictum was the order of the day. It remains so yet. We have come from our obscurity and shown as best we could the bosses that are given us to keep quiet. We said then, and we say it now, we are out for better fare. We have barked and “bitted” as some of our “friends” can tell (vide this week’s local Press), and all who seek to wipe their feet on the animal are sure of a like reception. We believe now, as then, that every dog has his day, and the day of the B.D. is a long way off yet.

THE SHANNON CINEMA

Patrons of the above show will be sorry to hear that the pianist is gone. And why? Listen and I’ll tell you. Casey thumped six evenings a week, and his generous employer wanted him to work a matinee for nought ... Casey refused and got the sack, and now is on the unemployed list. All he asked for was 2s.6d. for the matinee, and that he was refused. We ask the question: Do the B.D.’s know this, and is the Tralee-owned show on Barrington Mall to get your support? Casey is a member of the L.F.W.U. And what about the rest of the members of the staff there? Let’s see about it. B.D.’s ought to know their duty by this time. And are we going to allow this Kerry Eagle to run a scab show in our midst?

THE BOLD, BAD BAKERS!

To any reader of that organ of Capitalism, the “Limerick Chronicle”, the impression left after reading their account of the bakers’ strike is the above. The Dog, however, has probed a bit further from the opposite side, and this is what he found: Since the war started the bakers have received in increases the sum of 1s. per sack, or from 6s. to 7s. in their usual weekly income. What body of men, public, lay or clerical, have not outdistanced this? Are they to blame when all around have moved? The dog says, Move on! Are they right in the demand for 1s.6d. extra, which will increase the wages about 10s.6d? The reasonableness of this request is apparent to all, and the organisation deserves a greater advance. Another side. The masters say they cannot afford to pay the demand unless they succeed in raising the price of bread ½d. per 4 lbs. allowed to be put on by the Controller would mean about 4s. per sack to the masters. Out of this 4s. the bakers ask about 1s.6d. Do you see the point? The bakers are out to live. Compulsion drives them to it. We leave the rest to the readers.

OUR CITY SCHOOLS

Interview any City Teacher. What does he report? A sad state of affairs, surely. “Come day go day”, or “Go as you please”, is the law today. Fact. The “Father” leaves the most important of all his duties — the education of his children — to “herself”, and in nine cases out of ten “herself” sees more virtue — and I do not blame her, poor woman — in the few shillings Jackie earns parcel hoddng than all the book-learning from Garryowen to Trinity College. Many city fathers are unaware that their boys are at work! Gospel! !

SCHOOL-SLACKERS

Of course, there are cases where young lads under fourteen must sacrifice their schooling in order to keep the wolf from the door. Food for the body comes before food for the mind,

ECHOES FROM

— THE —

BOTTOM DOG

“We must look at life in all its aspects from the point of view of the “Bottom Dog” — the oppressed — be it nation, class, or sex.”

in Nature’s programme. But does this argument apply to the swarms of school-age children one met with in every back street and laneway last week? We on yesterday counted 75 in a quarter of an hour’s walk! What is the good in Labour shouting “Give the poor man’s son a chance”? Do you know, reader — there is much to laugh at in Limerick platform performances. There is.

WOULD IT PAY?

In the Holy City of Limerick, Truth is a greater stranger than Affliction. ’Tis a scarce commodity. Seek it not at the Town Hall or the Technical School. There is Treachery and Trickery, aye and Thievery, going on all round. The Dog has eyes and ears, and knows how to use them. The latest “cant” in town “Would It pay?” sums up the situation. There are “whitened sepulchres” in this city who would try to sell their unprincipled, debauched souls, yes and the bodies of their wives and children; for low, filthy lucre or a well-paid post. Have no doubt whatever about it. They exist in Adare, also, as well as in Killaloe. You know some yourself. And these are the gentry that our workers look up to, forgetting the fact that one lowly day-labourer has more nobility of character than a nookery of Shoneen Jack Daws. Bottom Dogs, take care would you hand-to-your-hat a fellow of this typ’?! He’d fawn and fall down on the flat of his belly — that’s his brain-pan — before the devil in hell if it added another pound note to his bank account. Truth!

Blessed Oliver’s Secret Weapon

The latest contraception battle took place in the Dáil between the opposing political armies and was referred by proxy by Cardinal Conway. The battle was fought under the rival banners and war-cries of “Condum” on the one side and “Conned’ em” on the other. The fight went on with unabated ferocity and intensity through several Dáil sessions. The struggle was notable for the introduction, among other things, of a particularly vicious-looking and lethal weapon. The production of this symbolic, phallic-like weapon had a surprising and terrifying effect on the pro-contraception lobby, who were thrown into disarray by the very sight of the secret instrument.

Experts who found some fragments at the scene of the battle said that the weapon consisted of a condum stuffed with a carrot. During the most bitter moments of the fray loud masochistic shrieks were to be heard coming from the direction of Blessed Oliver Flanagan, whose passionate voice incanted in a veritable of religious frenzy: “Beat me with Phallus! ... Beat me some more .. If Matt Talbot could take it so can Blessed Oliver .. Beat me some more .. Beat(ification) ... Beat me Mortification!”.

After the battle Blessed Oliver stated that he was going on a victory tour of the dozen convents in his constituency as part of the anti-contraception celebrations. “You can always count on me to deliver the goods so long as they are not rubber goods”, Oliver purred to the war correspondents at Leinster House.